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# Neglected

Missionary  
News and Letters

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**The Arabian Mission**

# Arabia



DR. THOMS TREATING PATIENTS IN MATRAH.

NUMBER EIGHTY-FOUR

JANUARY - MARCH, 1913

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# The Arabian Mission.

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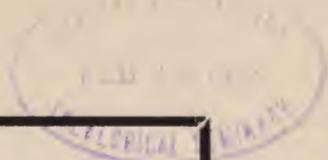
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## In Memoriam.

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DR. SHARON J. THOMS



DR. SHARON J. THOMS.

On January 16th by cable there reached the Board of Foreign Missions the sad intelligence of the sudden death at Maskat, Arabia, of Dr. Sharon J. Thoms. His death seems to have been due to an accident, the exact nature of which only the slower medium of the mails will reveal. This sudden and most unexpected closing on earth of a most useful life will bring grievous sorrow not only to those especially interested in the work of the Arabian Mission, but to the wide circle of those who came in contact with Dr. Thoms and felt his sincere zeal for his work, when he was recently at home on his furlough. Dr. Thoms was one of the increasing number of graduates of the University of Michigan who are doing such admirable work in the mission field of Arabia. By order of seniority, he was second on the list of our doctors in the land of Ishmael, his service dating from 1898, and dur-

ing these nearly fifteen years has labored in Busrah, Bahrein and Matrah. In Bahrein he was our pioneer medical man, and through long years built up the work that is today carried on in connection with the Mason Memorial Hospital. He had to contend with prejudice, with hatred, with opposition and with ignorance, but emerged successful from the fight. He began his surgical work under the most unfavorable conditions, operating in the open air, amidst the dirt and the dust, with only a kitchen table and a few necessary instruments as his entire apparatus, but before many years had passed the Lord moved the hearts of people at home to make it possible for him to do his work under more modern conditions. When he commenced to treat the sick at Bahrein he was not only not trusted but was even held responsible for the spread of plague and cholera; when he left he was beloved by many and trusted and respected by all. What more can a physician ask? Curiously enough, the writer's first surgical case in Arabia was the treatment of Dr. Thoms for a somewhat serious scalp wound, the result of an accident in connection with some repairing work that was being done on the hospital windmill, but later on he was able to heap coals of fire on my head, for, when I lay ill for weeks during the late summer of 1907, Dr. Thoms never wearied in his attention and laid me under lifelong obligations to him. In 1909 the Mission saw fit to send him to Matrah. This was an upheaval for him. It meant leaving work which he knew through and through, if only for the fact that it was his own, to go through for the second time the process of laying the foundations of medical work in an Arab town. Nothing daunted, he set to work in Matrah, that little town which is the gateway to inland Oman, so near to Maskat and yet so far, separated as it is from Maskat by a steep mountain pass, or, as an alternative, several miles by sea in a canoe. In the hot weather, if the sea is rough, Matrah is practically isolated, for that mountain pass in midsummer is more than flesh and blood can stand. Dr. Thoms was ever a lover of things mechanical and from the first he sought to link up Matrah and Maskat by telephone. For a long time the Sultan of Maskat was unwilling to give permission for wires to be strung between the two towns and Dr. Thoms was forced to consider

the possibility of a wireless telephone and had even imported some wireless apparatus, the gift of a friend at home, when the Sultan relented and permission was granted for the stringing of telephone wires on the Sultan's own telephone poles. It is more than probable that in superintending this installation he sustained the accident which caused his death. As at Bahrein so at Matrah he made his way into the hearts of the people and was rapidly building up a work which would carry the influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ far into the interior of Oman. There is additional pathos in the fact that he was planning to erect a hospital, the funds for which had been supplied, and thus to put the Matrah medical work upon a solid base just as he had done in years gone by in Bahrein. Thus is the Arabian Mission called upon to mourn the loss of the sixth of its members, who, in the short period of less than a quarter of a century, have died in active service. In the beautiful little natural cemetery of Maskat, which lies facing the rising sun, in a rocky cove almost inaccessible save by sea, Dr. Thoms will await "that last great day." He will not be alone, for side by side with him are George E. Stone, of our Mission, and Thomas Valpy French, that great bishop of the Church Missionary Society, who, at the age of 66, left his see in India to preach Christ to the Arab. Our hearts go out to his devoted wife and his three children, who have won the affection of all in the Mission, and it is needless to ask the prayers of all our readers for them in this their time of sore affliction. We need also to pray that the gap in our ranks may soon be filled so that the work which its founder loved so well may be checked only temporarily. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou *shalt* know hereafter." Under this great blow we bow in submission, not in the spirit of Mohammedan fatalism but in the spirit of Christian confidence, knowing that "God is working His purpose out."

C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.

# NEGLECTED ARABIA.

JANUARY—MARCH, 1913.

## Where We Work.

We are thankful that nineteen hundred and thirteen will bring but few changes for our working force. There is always a considerable loss of time in changing from one station to another in our wide-spread field, and worse still, of friendships and understanding of local conditions which are only gained through years of patient toil. And yet furloughs, sickness and change of plans do sometimes necessitate redistribution of missionaries. The on'y changes this year are those of Mr. Moerdyk from inland Oman to Bahrein, and Mr. Pennings for part of the year from Bahrein to the river county of Amara and Nasaria.

Inland Oman which is worked from Maskat as a base is now in a very unsettled condition. For years the large gun trade at Muscat has been a thorn in the side of the Indian Government, many of the arms eventually finding their way through Persia and Baluchistan to be used as occasion permits against the British frontier forces. Large sums of money have been spent in patrolling adjacent waters with doubtful results. Recently, the Sultan of Maskat has been persuaded, for a consideration, to impose what are expected to be effective restrictions upon the sale of firearms in the city itself. This has greatly incensed the tribes inland, who have become quite modernized in their methods of killing each other, and they bitterly accuse His Highness of subserviency to an outside Christian nation, threaten revolt, and generally seem a bit lukewarm in their welcome to us. The Sultan also just now fears that our presence inland might give color to the accusation that he has a non-Islamic policy. We therefore have thought best to withdraw Mr. Moerdyk from his appointment. At the same time, however, we are strengthening our force of colporteurs and hope to keep the door open until this disturbance which is not of our making has quieted down. Mr. and Mrs. Barny, Miss Lutton, and Dr. and Mrs. Thoms will still do radiant service at Maskat and Matrah.

Leaving Maskat on our journey northward we soon reach Linga, the Arab town on the Persian side, where Yusuf, our Egyptian helper,

has won his way, and probably assured us of permanent occupancy.

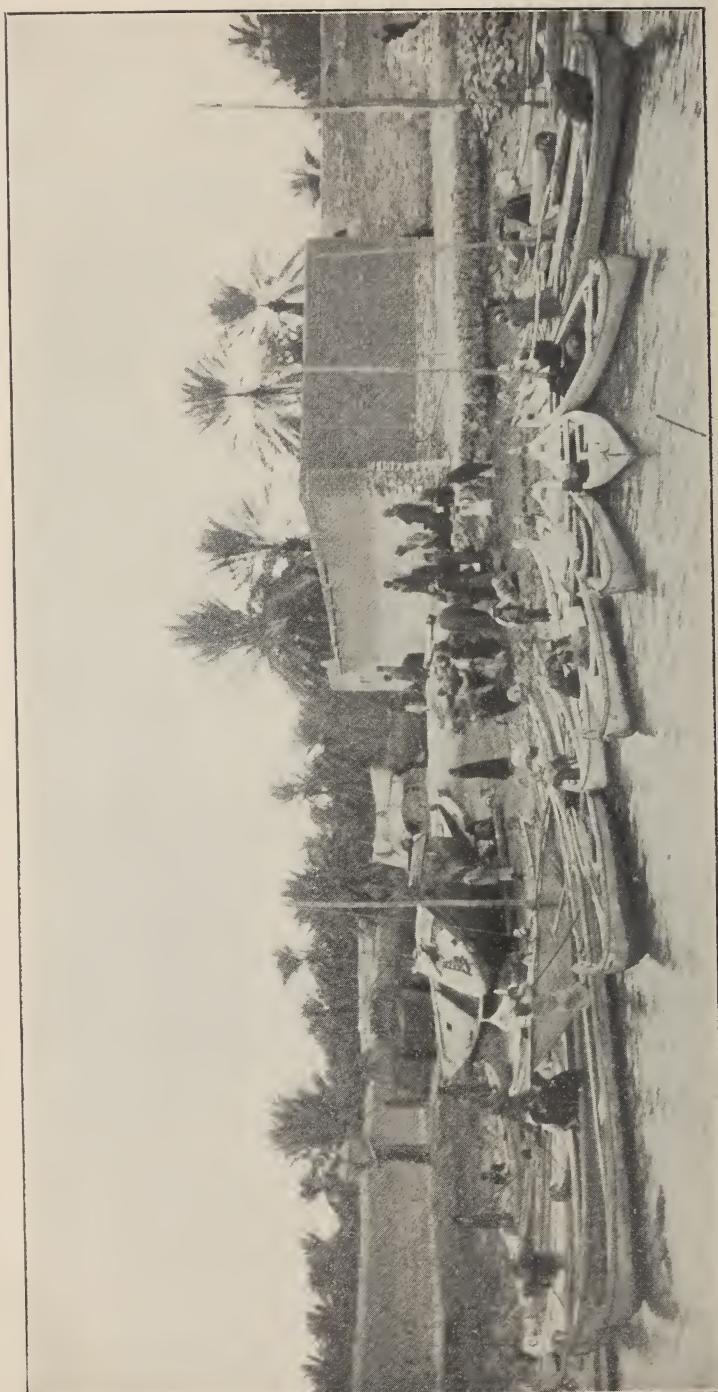
Before we reach Bahrein we pass by the so-called Pirate Coast, the scene of many encouraging visits and tours in years past, but which lately has been closed to us on account of local trouble. We hope that before long they will again see our faces and listen to our message.

Bahrein, which lost heavily by the transfer of Dr. Zwemer to



TYPICAL OMAN ARABS.

Cairo, will again this coming year, have two clergymen, one of whom will devote his main energies to educational work. Mr. Van Peursem will take this department while Mrs. Van Peursem will find opportunity to use her training as a nurse in the Mason Memorial Hospital. Bahrein is our central station, where many of the problems facing a new mission were first worked out, and where our activities first found full scope. The mainland—Turkish to the west and Arab



BUSRAAH CANAL SCENE,

to the south—is often in unsettled condition, but the tendency is ever to a more firm and stable rule, giving us better grounds for our hopes of growth in these directions. Under the enlightened supervision of the Indian Government, the prosperity of the Islands seems permanently assured. Our mission here is amply provided with buildings, and with an adequate working force we face the future with much confidence. Dr. and Mrs. Worrall will continue their medical work, and Miss Scardefield is still in charge of the girls' school. Mr. Moerdyk will take Mr. Pennings' place early in the year.

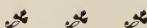
At Kuweit there are no changes this year. Dr. Harrison and Mrs. Calverley will do their best to treat the growing number of patients, looking forward to the time when the new hospital shall be finished. Mr. Calverley has his hands full in trying to meet new opportunities, evangelistic and educational. Our friendship with the ruling Sheikh and his people seems to be increasing and opening new doors for us yearly. One of these is the hinterland merging into the Nejd country of the centre of Arabia. It will be a disappointment if this same Nejd does not see one of our number before many months are past. Kuweit is another of those places on the Gulf, which, under the wise political direction of the British Government, seems to have a bright future ahead.

As at Kuweit, so at Busrah, no changes have been made other than releasing Mr. Van Ess from outstation work and giving him all his time for the growing school. Mrs. Van Ess is entering an un-worked field with her plans for a girls' school. One will undoubtedly help the other and together they will fairly represent the mission's purpose to push education in this promising quarter. Prosperity is opening the lives of the people to many new impulses and outside influences are making themselves more and more felt in religion as well as commerce. Here is our opportunity, nay, our obligation, to present our message in a manner fitted to the new conditions. We can of course, with God's help be faithful in *little* things—little schools, little preaching rooms, little colporteurage—but it must mean more to the progress of the Kingdom in Busrah if we have the chance to be faithful in larger things—larger schools, chapels, hospitals and bible shops—larger, better plans for reaching the many, many thousands all around us. In Busrah will be felt the only loss due to furlough this year. Mrs. Vogel will be leaving for America and there is no one to take her place in the village and outstations.

Amara and Nasaria will have what they did not have last year, a resident missionary. Mr. Pennings will be there for the larger part of the time. In this district there now seems to be a more peaceable

spirit among the Arabs. Much seed sowing has been done there in years past and with one of our number on the ground to care for the sprouting grain, our hopes go out to the harvest season.

JAS. E. CANTINE.



### The Arabian Secret Service.

At the close of Annual Meeting, there are many things on the hearts of the missionaries. There is joy for success; there is sorrow for failure. There is uncertainty at the thought of great tasks to be undertaken; there is longing for the accomplishing of purposes not yet realized. Such great areas of the neglected peninsula lie as yet untouched by the gospel of Christ. Are we to see Arabia evangelized in this generation? Not by the unaided efforts of a few missionaries scattered in small groups along the coast. By whose help then? By the help of the Arabian Secret Service, of which you may be a member. Will you be among those who, helping together by prayer, by faith and patience inherit the promises for Arabia?

Shall we tell you some of the things for which special prayer is needed? In the last year two Moslem men have openly confessed Christ in two of our stations. Now begins the work of rooting and grounding them in the faith. Will you pray that they may be strong against the tremendous temptations which assail those who would leave Islam? Two years ago two other such men expressed their desire to follow Christ, and these are still faithful, although not yet ready for baptism. Your prayers will help to keep them true.

Last winter a most promising woman convert yielded to the temptations of the life she had left. Today she is most unhappy. You can help her gain the victory over the Tempter.

Another woman convert, though having denied Christ, seems, through suffering, to have lost her mental balance. It is not His will that one of these little ones should perish.

Four converts who were once baptized are now living openly as Moslems. These are the things that cause heartburnings in missionary life. Pray that these wandering sheep may return.

Our Mission is gradually emerging from the stage of small beginnings into the stage of large institutional work. Money and plans are ready for building a much needed hospital in Matrah. The Sultan there refuses to sell a building site. Pray that he may soon cease his opposition. Another such hospital and a dwelling are to be built

in Kuwait and five thousand dollars are needed to complete the project.

Our first large educational work is being started in Busrah. These are important years in the history of what we hope will soon be an influential Christian college.

The aim of the Arabian Mission from the date of its founding has been the occupation of the interior from the coast as a base. Almost a quarter of a century has passed and the interior remains unevangelized. Last year all attempts to enter were unsuccessful.



SON OF SHEIKH OF RIADH.

During this year other efforts will be made. In no part of the work are the services of the Arabian Secret Service more urgently needed than in this. Success must be the result of prayer. Will you pray now and often for these objects.

ELEANOR T. CALVERLEY.

## Touring on the Karun River.

It has been said of Missions to Moslem peoples, that the Medical work is the heavy artillery of the battle, since it breaks down prejudice and softens Moslem fanaticism, thus preparing the way for schools and churches. Medical Mission work is one of the fruits of Christianity, and so the Medical Missionary as the good Samaritan has unequalled opportunity to witness for his Master among the Moslems.

The Hospital as an institution exerts a powerful influence throughout the year, but the Medical Missionary needs to go out among the



BOAT ARRIVING AT KUWEIT WITH FRESH WATER.

people, far and near, in order to come into closer touch with all classes, and we try each year to tour for some time when the Hospital work is slack.

For a long time it has been my desire, to tour in the Karun River country because hundreds visit our Hospital from this region, so that we have not a few friends in the towns of Arabistan. Hence early in August our party consisting of Salome, the Hospital preacher, Julius, the Hospital Dispenser, my servant and myself, started out for Mohammera, where we were to take the boat for Ahwaz. The Karun is a short swift river, having its source in the mountains of

Persia, near Ispahan and Kermanshah and joining the Shat el Arab, about thirty miles below Busrah City. At their junction is located Mohammera a city of considerable and growing commercial importance. Here we took a small river steamer, for Nasaria el Karun, or Ahwaz as the British call the town. The steamer was much smaller than those plying the Tigris between Busrah and Baghdad, but it made fairly good time, covering about 125 miles in two days, through a country level, but in reality rising about a foot a mile. This country is very suitable for irrigation, and is covered with green vegetation, even in the hot months of summer. The same ancient method of drawing water is used that one sees everywhere along the Euphrates and Tigris. Along the river banks are wells with inlets from the river. From these weary oxen draw the water, by means of a skin bucket and a rope running over a pulley attached to wooden uprights. The operation is repeated hundreds of times all day, and sometimes long into the night one hears the creaking and squeaking of dozens of these bucket pumps. One ten horse power engine would irrigate enough land to open the eyes of the people to the inefficiency of their methods. An engineer who traveled down the Karun with us, said that a steam barge supplied with two ten horse power pumps, could go up and down the river, supplying water for irrigation. This would mean a fortune for the owner of the boat, not only, but also for the users of the water.

On the steamer we sold quite a number of Bibles. The Moslems showed little opposition, until a Chaldean Catholic priest, told one of them that the Gospel which we sold was not the true Gospel, but one that had been corrupted. The Moslem came to me, when I explained to him how and where we got our Arabic Bible. He went away satisfied. There should be harmony among Christian workers out here, because one of the hardest arguments to meet from the Moslem, is the oft-repeated one, that we Christians have taken certain passages referring to Mohammed from the Gospels.

Having arrived at Nasaria, Sheikh Chessab, son of Sheikh Ghazal, of Mohammera, received us, and insisted that we make his house our headquarters. We accepted this invitation, and were royally entertained during our stay.

The second day after our arrival, the Sheikh held a celebration in honor of his younger brother, on which occasion I counted nearly three hundred Arab horsemen who took part in the manœuvres and sports. Some of the horsemen made a fine appearance as they raced past one another, in a mock spear and rifle contest.

Ahwaz is a town of about eight thousand inhabitants, and is the center of a good farming district. Just above the city there are steep

rapids in the river, so that merchandise has to be transshipped by mules and carts, to a place two or three miles farther up, from whence steamers carry the freight another hundred miles into the interior.

It is nearly four years since the Anglo-American Oil Co. struck oil at Mesjid Solomon, in the foot-hills back of Ahwaz. Since that time, oil has been piped a distance of nearly one hundred miles to the banks of the Shat el Arab. Ahwaz is the center of the field management, and is consequently rapidly developing into a busy place. One sees here two or three automobiles, and small mule tram cars, working overtime on the company's business. As over a million pounds sterling have been put into this project, there is no doubt that the prosperity of this part of Arabistan has come to stay.

As yet there are no missionaries or colporteurs working in all this territory. The people who came to visit us at the Sheikh's house, were persistent in their demand for a dispensary and a school. The Sheikh treated us very kindly during our stay, so that we managed, not only to treat a good many patients but also to sell many Bibles, in his own house. He invited us to come there to open up work, promising us his help and favor.

In all we were in Ahwaz less than a week, but we sold over 150 portions of Scriptures, mostly Gospels. We were obliged to return at the beginning of the Moslem Fast of Ramadhan. But for that we would have stayed until all our books had been sold, and all our medical supplies exhausted. At another time we hope to go prepared for a longer stay, and we trust that we can occupy the town with a Bible shop before many years have passed.

ARTHUR K. BENNETT.



### Moslem Women's Meetings in Bahrein.

In Bahrein there are two great leading sects among the Moslems, viz., Sunnis and Shiah. The Sunnis are greater in number and influence. The Chief or Ruler of the island is a Sunni.

A very antagonistic party spirit exists between these two sects, and just as we read "The Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans" it is practically the same here between Sunni and Shiah. They do not pray in the same Mosques nor intermarry, nor allow their children to attend the same school. The Shiah observe or keep a ten days mourning every year which the Sunnis utterly ignore and ridicule. In many minor details they differ. The Shiah do not wash their hands the same way as the Sunnis before they pray. In a fu-

neral procession the Sunni women do not join or follow in the funeral procession but remain at home and weep until the relatives return. The Shiah women on the contrary follow and make great lamentation on the way to the grave, and if the corpse is a female the women lower the body into the grave, the men then return (after the women have departed) and fill in the grave.

Sometime ago I attended two different meetings, one among the Sunnis and one among the Shiahhs. Perhaps you would like to hear a description of these two meetings.

The Sunni women do not hold many meetings with the exception of Ramadhan. I do not think they amount to four in the year.

The Sunnis celebrate the birthday of Mohammed, and at one of these gatherings I was present.

The first thing that strikes one on entering are the bright colored



PHOENICIAN (?) TOMBS AT BAHREIN.

dresses of the women and children. Various shades are mixed together, bright purple, orange, green, majenta and numerous other tints, which we cannot say blend well. Every one has on a new dress in honor of the occasion. All the jewelry they possess is worn, necklaces, ear-rings, nose rings and fingers adorned, and ornaments dangling from the braids of their hair, also jasmine and bunches of sweet smelling greens hang on the braids of their hair. Not content with finger rings they dye their hands and decorate them with a yellow and black stain, which they think is very becoming. When you sit down (but not on chairs) you have time to study the whole group.

READERS. In a prominent place, sitting against the wall are the readers, perhaps ten. Each reader takes part in turn, and reads in a high pitched key. I could not say that any of the audience paid any attention to what she was reading. Visitors were coming in all

the time and saluting one another as they took their places. The women would say "How is your condition?" "How is your evening?" "How are your children?" and many more of the same inquiries, and this was often repeated three times over. The reader never stopped, but went on reading as if the whole audience was hanging on her words.

I did my best to listen to what she was reading, but could gather nothing of exhortation, edification or comfort from what she read. It was a mass of endless repetitions and jingling rhymes. At stated times the whole assembly would respond, and that was rather harmonious; but if we repeated God's name the numberless times like they did it would sound anything but reverent. Over and over again they would respond "O God!" and nothing else.

Then came a very interesting part of the meeting (to the women), various slaves dressed in handsome silk dresses passed around with refreshments.

REFRESHMENTS. The coffee pots were held in the left hands and the handleless cups in the right. The coffee cups are always presented by the right hand, and the coffee pot held and poured out by the left hand. The reader never paused, but continued her reading while the refreshments were being partaken of.

Can you imagine a meeting in your own land like this one? The reader reading aloud, people coming in and going out as they choose, children making a noise, women scolding them, and refreshments passed around at the same time.

This is a faint pen picture of a Sunni Moslem's afternoon gathering or reading.

#### SHIAH MEETING.

The Shiahls on the contrary have many meetings in the year. Some of them have readings every Thursday and Friday afternoons. Some of these reading halls or rooms are attached to the houses of the wealthier class.

SHIAH HALL. Last week a Shiah lady asked me into the reading hall of her house. It was a good thing she favoured me, because many would have put me out, but it was her property and she had great influence. I took a very back seat (on the floor) so that I would not defile any of the ladies present. I kept my face as solemn as a judge, but it was hard work when I heard some of their remarks. Said one, "What is she doing here?" "What does she want?" Ans. "Oh, she will not do any harm." "Shall I put her out?" Ans. "No, let her stay." I let them fight it out between themselves, and kept perfectly quiet.

PIPES. In a corner of the room, very close to the readers, a

woman was seated getting the pipes ready. Some one has given these pipes a very good name, "Hubble bubble." They are earthen jars, and hold about a pint of water. A small receptacle of hot charcoal and tobacco is placed in the top of the jar, a long hollow bamboo handle is placed into a hole in the side of the jar, the other end of the stick is placed in the mouth. As the woman draws through this hollow bamboo a strange gurgling sound is made, something like the sound of a child making soap bubbles.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred women smoke these pipes. I have never seen a Sunni woman smoke one of these pipes, neither have I seen a Shiah house without one.

The women were dilatory in assembling, so one of the women went close to an opening and gave a peculiar call, which cannot be produced on paper, it would have to be recorded on a gramaphone.

They do not present the bright appearance of the Sunni women. They are wrapped up in a large dark blue shawl, which covers the head and drapes the whole body.

When the meeting commenced there were only two readers present, but before the meeting closed I counted twelve.

When the reader began I thought "what a small meeting," but just at the close over fifty had assembled and more were coming after the meeting had dispersed.

The first reader was very short sighted, her nose almost touched the page. She read very fast and in a high pitched tone and very nasal, the more nasal the tone the more effective the reading. Such a jingle and mixing of things—the chief topic and responses were all about Hosain (Mohammed's grandson), who was slain on the plains of Kerbela. The Shias look upon him as a martyr, an intercessor and Saviour. I was rather startled to hear the reader bringing in Jesus the Son of Mary, who had something to do with Kerbela. In one of their responses they plaintively wailed "O Ali father of Hosain we have none but thee to help us."

Some of the women wept from the beginning of the meeting to the finish. At times the women would beat their breasts, and swaying their bodies backwards and forwards and calling out "Hosain, Hosain" over and over again.

In the midst of all this wailing and reading the pipes were placed in front of these women, and through the cries were intermingled these gurgling sounds of the pipes, all over the room. Women kept on coming in, greetings were exchanged. Some were shouting to the unruly children in angry tones, "Go out you wild beasts," "Stop your noise you devilish ones," and many curses, etc. Through it all the

reader went on, never stopping for a second, not even raising her eyes from the book.

Just before the close of the meeting coffee was passed around, one said to me, "You don't drink coffee," I replied "you will not offer me any," she said again "Oh you don't drink it" I answered "try me and see." At once she offered the cup, and I drank it to the astonishment of those sitting around me. My great comfort was the coffee was hot, so I need not be afraid of germs, for the cup was not very clean, and had been used by many before it came to me.

I sat the meeting out to the finish, and I thought what is it that brings these women together every week? It is the same reading, it never varies. In a manner they do not listen and do not receive a crumb of comfort or anything to help them along their dark and cheerless journey. I could not help thinking the chief attractions are the pipes and coffee and any little bits of gossip they hear at these meetings. In all their readings week after week and year after year, not a word is ever mentioned about sin, or how to live pleasing in "God's sight," nothing to lead or show them we are debtors and One has paid our debt and atoned for our sins. Their whole theme is about a very sinful man, who died many years ago in battle on the plains of Kerbela. This is the one they extol and weep about, a dead man.

**APPEAL.** Oh, sisters, you who live in Christian lands and listen to soul stirring addresses, and enjoy Bible Readings and Conferences, pray for these poor women. They have nothing to help them along the path of life, no comfort through the "Dark valley". They repeat God's name numberless times in the day, but know not and understand not His wondrous love in sending a sinless One, a Saviour Who died that they might live.

FANNY LUTTON.



## A Short History of the Persian Gulf.

Those accustomed to correspond with missionaries of the Arabian Mission, are aware that the address to which they usually send their letters is not "Arabia" but "The Persian Gulf". This is due to the fact that our work is as yet confined to the eastern littoral of Arabia, most of which is washed by the waters of the Persian Gulf. The address Persian Gulf is thus more exact than Arabia, which refers to the whole peninsula. And however unfamiliar the name of this Gulf may appear to some, he who has a light knowledge of general history and of geography as related to it, is aware that these waters

have occupied a very important place in the history of the world, a place far out of proportion to their size and volume. A short outline of this history may therefore be of interest. We have gathered the following from a small volume, entitled, "Cornelis Cornelizz Roobacker's Scheeps Journal, Gamron, Busrah, (1645)," this being the log of the first Dutch ship that came up to Busrah.

Even in the days of hoary antiquity, when Babylon and Assyria were the powerful nations of the earth, this Gulf was one of their highways of commerce. In fact some scholars are of the opinion that long before this even, the Phoenicians (later the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon) occupied Bahrein and the adjacent coast of Katif, and believe that their migration to their later home was caused by earthquakes or attacks of enemies. The existence of a large number of ancient burial mounds in Bahrein is adduced as a proof of this contention.

The conquests of Alexander the Great also brought him into relation with this Gulf. He sent thither his commodore Nearchus with a fleet of some two thousand vessels, though only some twenty galleys and a few transports reached their destination.

In fact all the ancient nations of Asia Minor were either directly or indirectly concerned with this Gulf, for it formed the natural highway between these countries and India and the distant island of the East Indies.

The significance of this Gulf rose greatly soon after the death of Mohammed, when the forces of Islam had finally subjugated the tribes of Arabia. Between the years 641-1507 the Gulf became the chief highway between the East and the West. The trade at this time was entirely in the hands of the Arabs, who did not confine themselves to the Persian Gulf, but penetrated as far as India, Java and even China. In turn, the Chinese traded here in larger ships than the Arabs had, and in such large numbers that this Gulf was called for a time "The Chinese Sea."

The Arabs did not limit themselves to their wares but made use of their many trading opportunities to spread their religion. This process might have continued an indefinite time had not the Occidental nations begun to penetrate the Orient, especially after the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. After a cruel war which lasted some nine years the domination of the Gulf passed into the hands of the Portuguese who managed to retain control for about 150 years. This power was broken in 1622 by the Shah of Persia assisted by an English Fleet; however they remained in control of Maskat till 1650. A few old castles at the entrance of Maskat harbor date from the time of their occupation.

The period of Portuguese influence was followed by that of the two East India Companies (The Dutch and the English), of which two the Dutch was by far the stronger till shortly before the time the company left the Gulf.

The English gained the balance of power by the suppression of piracy (1808-1865), which has finally ended in a state of affairs strongly resembling a protectorate.

During the last year the affairs of the Gulf have been the subject much political discussion, seeing Russia is supposed at times to cast a longing eye towards the Gulf of Persia. On the other hand, the English would hardly be expected to welcome such a rival here owing to the proximity of India. Indeed should any other foreign power attempt to take forcible control of any place in the Gulf, the result would most likely be a war.

The Gulf is growing in importance these days because of the Baghdad Railway which promises to become a reality at last. The railroad which has been the subject of talk for so many years is at last to be built. The importation of railway material from this side has begun, so that we can expect the completion of this road in the relatively near future. The significance of the Persian Gulf will then be still further increased, for it is possible that it will then again become what it once was, a highway for a vast volume of traffic between the East and the West.

G. J. PENNINGS.



## The Pearl Divers.

BY DR. PAUL W. HARRISON.

A sort of odor of romance, the faint perfume of The Arabian Nights, clings to the idea of pearl diving, but, like many other things in this sordid world, closer acquaintance dispels the romance and the odor that is left is not so inviting. Poets have written about it, but it is to be feared that they never saw the real process.

It is really astonishing to see how many of our fellow human beings earn their livelihood in thus ministering to the vanities of their more fortunate brothers. Kuweit is a city of perhaps fifty thousand inhabitants. Nearly the whole population is supported by pearl diving. No one has any statistics of the exact number of divers leaving Kuweit each year for the pearl banks, but the British Consul estimates it at twenty thousand. A larger number than that, possibly twice as many, make the Bahrein Islands their home. And when is

added to this large number many more, nobody knows how many, from the Persian Coast, and we realize that this represents only the northern divers, so to speak, and that south of El Katar there is a diving center at Debai perhaps as large, possibly larger, one stands really astonished at the size of the industry. It appears to be the main reliance of the coast dwellers for the whole gulf.

The division of profits is an interesting economic study. The owner of the boat (for all diving is done from boats, of course), gets 20 per cent. This is from the gross catch before any expenses have been deducted. Next the expenses of the season are paid. This includes everything that has been spent for food, repairs or anything else connected with the work. What remains is then divided up in strict equality, each diver sharing alike. The captain, who does little or no diving, but who superintends the whole season's campaign, receives simply one share along with the rest, and one share goes to the Sheikh as his tax on the industry. Rope pullers sometimes receive half a share, and sometimes two-thirds. The provision that makes the Sheikh a partner in the season's profits is a good piece of legislation. It provides revenue for him and protection for the diver. As a matter of fact the arrangement of things is not as equitable as the theory because both the purchase of supplies and the sale of pearls is in the captain's hands and he has great opportunities for profit, which are not wasted, if reports are to be trusted.

With the large element of chance entering into the final profits of a season—one boat coming back, each diver rejoicing in a thousand rupees addition to his wealth, and another making nothing—it is easy to see how such an industry will be popular. The instinct that makes men love to gamble plays a large part in making the Arab love pearl diving. Indeed, when the season comes on it is hard to find workmen for anything. The British Consul himself this past year has had to get along without a boat crew during the diving season. The missionary's cook and the hospital servant went on the same quest, so the popularity of pearl diving was impressed on our minds quite strongly. It, however, is dangerous and very hard work. The men dive from a small boat, all day long, in water which may be as much as seventy-five feet deep. They eat practically nothing during the day except two or three dates and a little very strong coffee. At night after the day's work is done they eat a little more, but never much. Then through the night they sleep huddled together in their small quarters, to begin over again the next morning. Scurvy is a disease hardly known at home any longer, but after the diving season there is no lack of it in Arabia. Besides, there are the numbers bitten by sharks, and those who are not able to stand the deep diving. We were told in one

place of four men that had died during the season because they had not come up quickly enough. It is altogether a dangerous business, but the people like the money it brings, so it grows in popularity every year.

In view of the number of Arabs engaged in diving, and the amount of disease that develops among them, it was decided to take a trip among them while at work and see whether it might be possible to minister to their physical needs and also, while so doing, find opportunity for direct evangelistic work as well. So we took a fair supply of medicines and instruments and a colporteur with his books and one fine Monday morning toward the end of the season we hoisted a big sail and were off. It was really a fine sort of picnic as well as a missionary trip. For a vacation trip we vote for a boat, and preferably a sailboat. We found, however, that the missionary, and especially the medical work, was a little disappointing. Everybody was too busy seeking the Arabian pearl to want even to hear of "The Pearl of Great Price" and even the alluring prospect of medical treatment was only sufficient to gain a few minutes. However, we persisted and visited something over one hundred diving boats in the nine days we were among them. We extracted quite a number of aching teeth and presumably contributed considerably to the bodily comfort of that many people at least. At the end of the eighth day we came to Darin, which is the center of the whole pearl trade north of Katar, and here we terminated our direct visitation of the boats.

The sea is free, but Darin is under the Turkish government, as we speedily discovered. We wanted to investigate the place, for we had already found out that the best way to reach the divers was not by visitation of the boats, but would presumably be by location for the season at some center. So I sent the pharmacist ashore to see what sort of place it was and to ask as to the number of boats visiting the harbor during the season. We were able to see that the place was a real center, for there were over 150 diving boats in the harbors at the time. Among the people that the pharmacist met was one of the Turkish garrison of the place, who seemed fully as much interested in the pharmacist as the pharmacist was in Darin. However, the investigation was pursued in all good conscience in accordance with orders we had given, and toward sundown we were all together again in the boat getting ready to enjoy supper with a real picnicker's appetite. This pleasure was, however, to be temporarily denied us, for who should appear at the side of the boat but the Wazir of the Sheikh, accompanied by two Turkish soldiers. The party brought us a rather peremptory invitation to accompany them to the presence of the Sheikh. So, in accordance with their orders, the doctor and the cap-

tain of the boat left to see what was desired. The soldier, who was the same one who had seen the compounder during the afternoon, was considerably exercised in his mind to know what we desired in so spying out the land. He professed to fear a British invasion of the place, of whom we might be in some sort the advance guard. The Sheikh, however, was courtesy itself. Our mission explained, we tried with no great success to extract some additional information from him, and a little later returned to the supper that we had left. We were, however, requested to report the next morning and go on an hour's march inland to interview the Turkish Governor of Katif. We promised with great joy, for nothing suited our purpose better than a chance to see him about the opportunity to come and open medical work in Darin during the coming diving season. The next morning, though, the Sheikh's mind had changed and we were not able to do anything of the sort. It was quite a disappointment, but I have no doubt it was the fault of the Governor rather than the Sheikh. He probably did not care to see any "Ingleezee" missionary.

The trip was valuable chiefly for the better view of a great opportunity that it gave, and also because it showed how another year we can in some measure meet that opportunity. What ought to be done is to have one of the doctors locate in Darin during the latter two-thirds of the diving season. He would have a large number of sick people to treat and some of them desperately sick. He would have a disagreeable place to live in, but not much worse than Bahrein except that it would be quite a problem to get his mail. He would have, beyond all that, the evangelistic opportunity that always goes with medical work, which is meeting a great need, and, finally, it is not at all impossible that in the good Providence of God he might be able to work in from even such a small start to the closed land of El Hassa.

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The attention of our readers is called to the fact that the Arabian Mission has recently decided to follow the system of the Royal Geographical Society in the spelling of Arabic proper nouns. The broad features of this system are that vowels are pronounced as in Italian and consonants as in English. This new decision will necessitate a change in the way of spelling some of our familiar words and special attention is called to Maskat and Matrah.

# Books You Ought To Read

Arabia—The Cradle of Islam.

Revised and brought up-to-date,                    \$2.00 net

*S. M. Zwemer, D.D., F.R.G.S.*

The Moslem Doctrine of God                    50c net

*S. M. Zwemer,*

The Moslem Christ                                \$1.00 net

*S. M. Zwemer,*

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## BOOKS FOR THE CHILDREN

By Samuel M. & Amy E. Zwemer.

Zig-zag Journeys in the Camel Country

Arabia in Picture and Story,                    \$1.00 net

Topsy Turvy Land

Arabia Pictured for Children

75c

These books may be had from the Board of Publication,

25 East 22d Street, New York.

The one magazine that will tell you all you should know about Islam and the progress of Christian Missions in Moslem lands, is THE MOSLEM WORLD, issued quarterly at \$1.00 per annum. Subscriptions are received in New York by The Arabian Mission, 25 East 22d St.

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